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## **Vedanta in Practice**



# VEDANTA IN PRACTICE

BY

SWAMI PARAMANANDA

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"THE WAY OF PEACE AND BLESSEDNESS,"  
"SOUL'S SECRET DOOR,"  
"REINCARNATION AND IMMORTALITY," ETC.

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BY  
SWAMI PARAMANANDA

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THIS LITTLE BOOK IS  
DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF MY BLESSED MASTER  
**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA**  
WHOSE PURE CHARACTER, UNSELFISH LOVE AND  
TEACHINGS OF TOLERANCE HAVE TIED THE EAST  
AND WEST IN SISTERLY BONDS OF LOVE  
AND SYMPATHY



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## PREFACE

IN giving religious instruction it is always important to show how principles can be put into practice. People sometimes imagine that the principles are all and that when one has learned them and can talk glibly about them, nothing further is necessary. This is as great a mistake as to suppose that looking at a well-spread table is all that is needed to satisfy hunger. Unless we not only eat the food, but also digest and assimilate it so that it becomes part of our bodies, nourishing and preserving them, all the food in the world would be of little use to us.

The aim of these lectures is to show us how to avail ourselves of the great prin-

## *Preface*

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ciples of Vedanta, so that they will become part of our daily lives; to teach us how we can put them into practice and live by them every moment of our existence. When we can thus assimilate them, they will nourish and sustain our spiritual nature, just as food preserves our physical frame. Vedanta is eminently practical, and each of the five lectures is designed to help the reader to put into practice the truth he has learned. They were given in response to the demand for instruction of this character, and they are sent out with the earnest hope that some may be helped by them.

# I

## SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

WE must always bear in mind the purpose of all spiritual practice:—that is, to open a channel within us by which we may feel the presence of God and see what is now invisible to us. The channel is opened when we are able to drop the consciousness of the little “I” and free our mind from impurities or from its attachment to material things only. So the whole object of our practice is to make us pure and humble, that we may approach God with openness of heart. There are various methods by which this may be accomplished—by prayer, by meditation, by work, devotion, self-sacrifice and self-control. If, however, we follow any one of these methods without remembering the purpose of it, it may produce just the re-

sult we are trying to avoid; that is, it may stimulate the ego and thus prove a drawback. No matter what we do, therefore, we must never lose sight of the fact that God is the Supreme Reality, the Highest Self; He is the only one to be depended on, not the lower self; and constantly surrendering ourselves to Him in our thought will so purify us that we shall be able to find a connection or open a channel by which we may unite ourselves with the Supreme.

This is what is meant by religious practice: To have a definite consciousness regarding the Real, regarding Spirit, not through books or through some one else, but through one's own self. Each one must be able to awaken his own inner nature. He must be able to grasp the meaning of life, to perceive the existence of God directly. That is the aim of all study and practice. A man who lives here and per-

## *Spiritual Practice*

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forms the duties of life must know purpose of life; he must know his relation with the Unseen Doer; he must understand the Force which is constantly working within and without him. The science of Yoga teaches this. The very word *Yoga* signifies man's union with the Supreme. Until he has attained that union and finds that he is being guided by God along the right path, he cannot have any sense of security; and so long as he does not feel that he is safe, he cannot enjoy life. However, at every moment of his existence he is wholly devoted to the Supreme, though he can never feel separated from Him. When under all circumstances, in the waking and sleeping, we carry the thought of God and put it into all our actions, then we are living the spiritual life.

The aim of the spiritual life is not to destroy our present life, but to enrich it to make it fuller, more effective. We n

never think that we are abandoning or neglecting anything when we try to do the right thing towards our soul. On the contrary, we cannot say that we are working for the world, if we do not pay proper attention to our own soul. This awakening of soul-consciousness is the very first step that every individual being must take. And in that all the problems of life are included. When it is accomplished, then what we now regard as unseen becomes seen; what we now believe to be impossible becomes possible; for as the channel opens, there comes the flow of Reality.

At present the channel is blocked on account of our ignorance, or because perhaps we are unconsciously turning away from the Real. If there is a beautiful picture before you, but you are looking in the opposite direction, you do not see it. And this is what bars the vision of Reality. We are constantly looking to the exter-

nal; we are absorbed in the affairs of the outer world, without ever stopping to observe what is happening within. But what happens in the outside world is nothing but the effect. If we want to control the effect, we must find the cause. If we want to control death, we must know what life is. We cannot control death by simply thinking of death; we must find life. That is what philosophy teaches. A man who is running after the external must withdraw his mind from it so that he can get another point of view. The life of meditation or reflection within one's own self does not mean laying aside our outer activities; it means gaining a new point of view, which is just as important—perhaps more important—than our present one, because it gives a truer grasp of life and leads to the cause of things. As we unfold our inner life, we are better able to adjust the outer.

The external or physical life becomes much easier when we understand our spiritual life, for it is through our spiritual life that we exist physically. Not being conscious of that fact, we try only to nourish the physical and the method we apply in giving nourishment also is not proper; that is why we feel such impoverishment, such disappointment and helplessness in our life. We are like a man who is charmed with some special branch or flower or fruit of a tree. He waters that and bestows all his care on that, but he soon finds that it withers because he has not poured the water at the proper place—at the root of the tree. So it is with our relationship with God. Unless we take care of that, unless we water it with our devotion, our spiritual consciousness will wither and we shall feel keenly the death of the objects on which our interest is focussed; but if we care for the root of

our life, then we do not have the same disappointment and suffering when we see the outer decay of things, because we know what is the Root and Source of our existence and of our happiness.

Yoga says: "By meditating on the Supreme Being of the Universe, by worshipping Him, by offering all our prayers to Him, Who is free from all grief, all impurity, all ignorance, Who stands above the conditions of the mortal world, Who is the Supreme Source of all light, wisdom and blessing; by meditating on Him, the Yogi attains to that state of consciousness which is the goal of all spiritual practice—the state of complete illumination." There is no greater help for the limited mortal who is constantly trying to run away from his limitation, than to be conscious of a Superior Power and to place himself voluntarily under the protection of that Power. In our practice, therefore,

if we can have something tangible, an Ideal upon whom we can call for guidance and help, with whom we can seek shelter, whose voice we are able to hear, whose presence seems a reality to us, very soon our concentration and meditation will take a definite form and this is extremely helpful in the life of spiritual culture.

Often we try to imagine the Absolute and pray to Him, but it is not an easy thing for the untrained mind to concentrate steadily on the abstract. When, however, we can take some definite aspect of that Absolute Infinite Being, as it is described in the Scriptures:—God the Effulgent Spirit, Father and Mother of all living creatures; the Giver of all blessings; Protector, Companion, greatest of all Friends, Who never fails us, because His friendship is not dependent on material conditions; Who gives His love freely to us,

whether or not we are able to give our full share to Him: when we can look upon God in this way, then we are able to form a closer relation with Him and our spiritual consciousness is more quickly awakened. This is what the Yogi or devotee does. He takes an Ideal and through that establishes true friendship with the Supreme Deity. He asks for His aid when he is in difficulty, he makes Him his constant companion and treats Him as the nearest of all friends. When a definite form like that is fixed in the mind, it becomes easier to pray and meditate.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that those who are born with a certain established relationship with God are very fortunate, because they begin with something definite. They are not going hither and thither searching in an indefinite way; but they already have an Ideal to start with and

therefore they find it natural to follow the spiritual path. But we can all have a definite Ideal in our mind, we can all make the spiritual life a reality to us, as real as our earthly life and earthly relations. Now we depend upon earthly support, but we can in the same way learn to find our support in God or Truth. As our spiritual nature unfolds and we grow more conscious of our relationship with the Supreme Spirit, we shall feel less and less bound by the material world; the fetters will fall off, as it were, of their own accord. All our imperfections will seem to drop away of themselves, as we come in contact with a Perfect Being. By merely disciplining our mind and body we cannot gain perfection. A man may strive for ages to root out his physical and mental imperfections, but even then he will not realize perfection. As, however, he thinks constantly of a Perfect Being, he absorbs the

attributes of that Being; or he opens a channel by which he establishes a relationship with the Undying, All-Knowing, All-Loving, Effulgent Spirit and thereby he breaks the bondage of material life.

In the Bhagavad-Gita Lord Krishna tells His disciple that it is very necessary to subdue the senses and learn to control the body and mind; but He says again that although one may starve the senses and thereby deaden their feeling, one has not gained much spiritually because desires still linger in the heart; when, however, one has seen the Supreme, then all desires and limitations drop off forever. So whatever we do, whether we give discipline to the body and mind or whether we turn our whole thought in the opposite direction, we must not forget that the main object of all our practice is to educate our inner being, to unfold our spiritual nature and to bring us face to face

with the Supreme; for He is the one real aim and object of all our search.

When we meditate on Him with conviction, then our heart becomes illumined with His Light and we attain super-consciousness, the consciousness which includes all lesser forms of consciousness. As we go about our ordinary life, therefore, we should sometimes stop, draw ourselves within and try to get the other point of view, to see that other aspect of our life. It is this balancing of the two sides and gaining a state of equilibrium which prepares our mind for the knowledge of the Supreme. (So long, however, as it is over-powered by one aspect of life—the physical and material—we can never know our inner being and our soul will be starved even though our body is fed.

## II

### RIGHT DISCRIMINATION

“THREE things are rare and only obtainable through the grace of the Supreme Being: human life, an earnest desire for liberation, and the helpful association of the Holy.” So it is said by the great illumined Sage Sankara.) Why should it be so? Why should human life be considered so great? According to the conception of creation given in Vedanta, this human body is the greatest body in the universe. Man is not only greater than all animals, but greater even than the *Devas* (angels). (No other manifested form of life is greater than man, for man alone is in a fit position to attain perfection.) Even the *Devas* have to come down and take human bodies in order to gain perfection. The reason of this is that on

the animal plane the mind is overpowered by matter and cannot go beyond the limits of the body, animals cannot think of higher things; while the *Devas*, who are supposed to live in heaven, are too absorbed in enjoyment to seek for freedom. Too much bodily pleasure ties us to the physical plane and obstructs our growth. It is only on the plane midway between these two that the highest spiritual attainment is possible. We find the same thing in human society. Those who have too much wealth and those who are stricken with extreme poverty both find it difficult to strive after higher things, for both conditions are serious impediments to the development of the soul. It is those who have neither too much nor ~~too~~ little who attain wisdom, because here alone do we find the forces of mind and body properly adjusted and balanced. This is the reason why the human state is so much es-

teemed, because it stands between the animal and the angel.

Having a human body, the next thing is to feel a thirst for liberation. How many among us really desire freedom, although we are human beings? There are very few who strongly desire to search for the real and who realize that all external things are unreal. But those who strive earnestly and sincerely to find the way to freedom and who succeed in getting the helpful guidance of an illumined teacher, are indeed blessed and have accomplished the purpose of human existence. This is indeed the aim and object of human life, although the majority have forgotten it and have taken other things as their ideals. But there comes a moment in every one's life when he cannot but turn toward the Truth. (He alone is a true man who strives for liberation by conquering his lower nature.) This human

body is a privilege and those who, having obtained this privilege, do not put it to the right use miss their opportunity.

What makes man greater than the animals? What makes one man greater than another? The intelligence or the power of understanding which he manifests. It is through the unfolding of the faculty of discrimination that man rises higher in thought and in wisdom. On the physical plane this faculty of discrimination is very little awakened. On the intellectual plane it is much more developed, but it is not fully revealed in a man until he has reached the realm of the spiritual. This discrimination is called in Sanskrit *Viveka* and is most important at every step of the spiritual life. *Viveka* means discriminating between the real and the unreal, between the true and the false. This world is a mixture. There are good things and evil things, there are beautiful things and

ugly things, there are beneficial things and harmful things ; and we are placed in the midst of this turmoil of duality to find our way out to that state where there is no duality, but only one existence of Absolute Bliss. For this we need *Viveka* to help us and lead us in the right path.

Without right discrimination we cannot make any progress whatsoever in the spiritual life. Things of the world, fascinating to the senses and appearing to be real, often lead us astray when we lack the power of discrimination. Hard indeed is the path of *Samsara* (earthly life). Even the keenest human minds are sometimes deceived by the charm of *Maya*. Ignorance is the cause of all our misery and suffering, and ignorance exists because of non-discrimination. When we take the unreal for the real and cling to it, we meet with disappointment and thus suffer. We see everything constantly changing around

us. The baby grows to boyhood, the boy becomes the man, who in his turn slowly approaches old age. The strong are weakened by desire and death comes to all. Yet all are clinging to this life and looking upon it as permanent. What can be the cause of this delusion except ignorance and forgetfulness of the True Self? We have identified the immortal Self with this little body which is bound to fall. "Ignorance is taking that which is non-eternal, impure, and non-Self, for the eternal, pure, blissful *Atman* (True Self)." Our present conception of the Self is nothing beyond the body. But the body cannot be the Self. The body can never become unchangeable or eternal. Whatever has a beginning must necessarily have an end. It cannot be otherwise. The body comes and goes, being a combination of matter, but the Spirit remains always, unchangeable and eternal.

Once Indra, the head of the gods, and Virochana, the head of the demons, went to learn about the Self from Prajapati. They both studied with him for a long time. Then one day the master declared: "Thou art that. Thou thyself art that Self which thou art seeking." Both of them were pleased and thought they had accomplished everything. They returned to their homes and gave the message to the people. The demon, having naturally a clouded ignorant nature, could not understand the real meaning of the words of his master, but took them literally and thought this body was the Self. So he declared to his people: "Make the body well and strong by taking good food and exercise. Be happy. None is greater than ourselves. We are *Brahman* (the Supreme)." Thus satisfied, he inquired no further.

The god, however, had a much finer

nature and he at once began to think: "Surely the master did not mean that the Self is this body. How can this body be the Self when it is so ephemeral, changeable and dependent on matter? The Self never changes." So he returned to the master and asked: "Sir, did you mean that this body is the Self? I see that the body changes constantly and dies, while the Self is unchangeable and immortal." The master replied calmly: "Thou art the Self. Find it out for thyself." Then Indra thought that perhaps the vital forces were the Self. But soon he found that they grew weak if he did not nourish them properly. Yet he went back to his master to enquire if he meant the vital forces, but Prajapati answered in the same way. Then Indra thought that he must mean the mind; but he soon decided that the mind could not be the Self, since it is sometimes happy and sometimes unhappy.

Thus through patient search and right discrimination and through the help of the master, the god attained knowledge of the Self—the Self which is neither body nor mind, but beyond both, “which sword cannot cut, which fire cannot burn, which water cannot melt, and air cannot dry, birthless, deathless, one, omniscient and all-pervading.” The God through proper discrimination reached the goal; while the poor ignorant demon missed it because of his fondness for the body and bodily pleasures.

We need not go far to find out the significance of this story. In human society we find many, like the demon, whose thoughts do not go beyond the limits of the body and who are perfectly satisfied with sense pleasures. But there are a few gods too, who through discrimination are able to differentiate the real from the unreal and thus release the Soul from the

bondage of matter. We can all become like gods and manifest Divinity within us, if we will only use this power properly. Similarly we can degrade ourselves to the animal plane, if we do not use it properly. Our progression or retrogression depends entirely upon ourselves, on our every thought and action. The Lord has given us the power of discrimination: if we use it we can rise higher; but if we neglect it and allow ourselves to be led away by our momentary impulses, we obstruct our growth and remain almost as ignorant as the animals. "The tendencies of eating and sleeping, fear and sense-enjoyment are common to both human beings and animals. Human beings excel the brutes in knowledge and understanding, but those who lack in knowledge can be classified with animals."

Some may think this an exaggerated statement, but it is not so. Much truth

can be found in it when properly analyzed. There are three planes of existence in this universe. The first is the physical or material plane, which is obvious in animal life. The thoughts on this plane cannot go beyond the body and senses, and the mind naturally revolves in that narrow circle. The second is the plane of intellect, where human beings are supposed to stand. The tendency of intellect is to overcome all physical limitations and give man more power over himself and over nature in general. This is undoubtedly higher than the physical plane, but still higher and entirely beyond body and mind is another plane which is known as the spiritual plane. No amount of physical strength or intellectual keenness can bring us to this plane. It is here that we experience supernatural powers, which can be gained neither through the senses nor the mind.

These three planes of existence correspond to the three *Gunas* or states of matter, called in Sanskrit *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. *Tamas* is the lowest and is most manifest in animals. The nature of *Tamas* is darkness and dullness and when it predominates in man he becomes stupid and inactive. His mind is filled with evil propensities and he fails to distinguish between right and wrong. Men of this class are very little removed from the animals, because they do not possess the power of proper judgment and their whole thought and action are centralized in their bodies. They often injure others to fulfill their selfish desires. But the intellect helps us to lift ourselves above this dull material plane. Through the intellect we become active and ambitious for happiness. This is the nature of *Rajas*. *Rajas* rouses our activity and thus helps us overcome all dullness. In this way through the power

of reason we progress much. But soon we find that the human intellect falls back after reaching a certain point. Here we struggle hard to penetrate the wall which stands between us and the Unknown. But at last through the earnest struggle of the soul, a channel is opened which gives us the power to see inner things. This is the state of *Sattva*, where a man is neither satisfied by fulfilling his physical desires nor contented to remain within the limits of his intellect, but stands steadily keeping the balance between both. In this state alone can he discriminate properly. *Sattva* gives equilibrium and enables us to think and act rightly.

According to the manifestation of these three qualities—*Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, do we find all the differences in human beings. (The man who possesses the quality of *Sattva* or goodness, in him alone we see true fearlessness, uprightness, purity,

truthfulness, forgiveness and the absence of all anger and passions. Through self-control he becomes peaceful and happy. And there is no other way to get peace. The man who follows the path of *Rajas* never finds any peace or rest, because there is no limit to human desires. The more we gratify them, the stronger they become. It is like adding fuel to the fire—we but make the flame stronger. How can we expect to find peace and happiness when we are overpowered by the darkness of *Tamas* or the unrest of *Rajas*? Through experience we gradually come to the conclusion that we must learn to control our lower tendencies and manifest the highest quality of *Sattva* or goodness, by which alone we can hope to attain perfection. This is done by discrimination. Thus by showing us the right way and saving us from errors, discrimination becomes our true friend on the spiritual path.

Now the question is, how to cultivate this quality of *Sattva*? (“By practice and non-attachment it is attained.”) Proper food can help us here. By living on pure food we can change our bodies and gain *Sattva* elements. There are three main causes which make food impure. Some foods are impure by their very nature, like animal food; others are impure because polluted by some unclean foreign substance; and still others become impure because touched by an unclean person. By avoiding these three sources of impurity we can undoubtedly make our whole organism stronger and purer. But one thing we must always remember and that is that all external observances are only secondary. The real purity is internal and only obtainable through the constant practice of unselfishness and chastity. When we lack discrimination there is great danger of falling into fanaticism,

that most deadly of all foes to progress. If, however, we keep the goal steadily before our eyes and in our hearts, then we can overcome every obstacle that lies in our way.

All outer observances regarding cleanliness, food, etc. are intended only as helps toward our spiritual development and should not be mistaken for the goal itself. So we must be ever watchful and guard ourselves from attaching undue importance to any merely external actions. Everything in this world has its legitimate use and also can easily be abused. Therefore we need to discriminate at every step in order to use our energies in the right direction. There is a story in India of a holy man who practised Yoga every day at certain hours. At these times he was much disturbed by a cat, so in order to have unbroken meditation he confined the animal in the next room. This went on

for a long time, until finally he passed away leaving behind him a disciple. This disciple sought earnestly to imitate his master, and thinking that the animal had been an essential part of his master's meditation, he spent much time trying to get a cat to tie in the adjoining room.

We often make a similar blunder and, mistaking the non-essential for the essential, waste our forces in vain. Most of our religious disharmonies are the direct result of these unassimilated ideas. Great souls do things with a certain purpose in view and their followers not understanding the true spirit of their actions, misinterpret them, often to their own hindrance. Rituals and ceremonies should not be our main object in worship, but should be regarded only as ~~helps~~ towards the goal. If we make them our foremost consideration, we are easily misled and our growth is retarded. Let us then seek sincerely and

watch carefully, always working with steadiness, perseverance, faith, and discrimination. Then through the Grace of the Lord we shall attain freedom.

### III

## BUILDING OF CHARACTER

EVERYTHING in this world is transitory and fleeting. From the highest manifestation of human life to the lowest worm all are destined to perish. No man was ever born who could stop his body from changing constantly. Body is the name of a series of changes. What remains, then, but character? Time swallows up everything except character; this is the only thing it cannot touch.

If we look back and study the history of mankind, we find that, no matter how hard the struggle may have been to live here forever, in the end all have been conquered by death. Emperors and kings have striven to build up something per-

manent, but in vain. Look at the mighty Roman Empire, look at the wonderful Greek civilization, where are they? The one has crumbled into dust, the other lies in ruins. And what has outlived them? The message of Jesus Christ, the son of a carpenter, and that of the beggar Buddha. They are still ruling the universe. Mysterious are the ways of the Lord. Those who wanted to live have died; those who were willing to die have continued to live. Christ, who freely gave up His life, lives eternally. Buddha, who renounced a whole kingdom, rules over half the world.

Why did these great Teachers renounce? Because they found that everything that is a combination of matter is destined to perish; and they sought something more permanent. When Christ was tempted by the devil, He cast aside the world because He well knew its hollowness and that it could never bring real happi-

ness. So Buddha resisted the temptations of Mara, because he had realized that this world could bring only sorrow in the end. Both of these great Souls valued character more than all else and devoted all their attention to that. They renounced or threw aside all material things knowing that character alone would live.

One obvious thing in all spiritual characters is that they naturally tend toward renunciation, because without it spiritual growth is impossible. This idea of renunciation is often misunderstood and the majority of human beings are even horrified by the mere mention of it. Yet we know that it forms the very foundation of spiritual life, and we see how all great men have drawn their inspiration and strength from this source. Show me one mighty spiritual character who did not sacrifice all selfishness and go through supreme renunciation. “You cannot serve both God

and mammon." There is great depth of meaning in this simple saying of the Lord, but we cannot grasp it as long as our hearts are weak and impure. (What makes us weak and impure? Dependence on matter and forgetfulness of the glorious spirit within; the more we love the world with all its vanities and depend on it, the weaker we become.)

(God is the source of all our strength and inspiration;) but when we forget Him through the charm of matter, we become spiritually blind. (Love of the world is blinding, while love of God is sight-giving; the two cannot co-exist.) You cannot have sincere love for God in your heart and at the same time fondness for worldly enjoyments. (It is impossible, for they are as inharmonious as darkness and light.) One only can exist at a time. (So the Sages have declared boldly: Give up! Give up the world and love God, the Supreme

Goal, from Whom we have come into existence, in Whom we live, move and have our being. Do not forget Him, do not neglect to serve Him. Love Him and serve Him and let all else go.

This is the watchword of all religions and religious teachers. (Single-hearted love for God is also the aim and object of renunciation.) No violence or hardheartedness is necessary in renunciation. It is a natural growth of the heart. (When we love God with our whole heart and soul, there is no room for anything else and renunciation becomes easy.) But renouncing does not mean running away from family, friends and relations, or being cruel to them. One can cultivate the spirit of renunciation in one's home by practising non-attachment and unselfishness. The question may be asked, What do we gain by it? The highest reward, for there is no greater good than to love God above all

external things and to gain knowledge of the Supreme.

Renunciation is one of the most important factors in the building of character. (What is character? Every act or thought leaves an impression on the mind. All these impressions taken together make up the character.) When a large number of similar impressions are left on the mind, they unite and become a habit. It is truly said that "habit is second nature." Indeed, Swami Vivekananda often remarked that it was all the nature we had. What we are to-day is the result of our past. This gives us great consolation and hope, because if what we do is only habit, then we can make or unmake it through our thoughts and deeds.

There are two planes in this universe where our minds dwell. The *Sat*—the real, the permanently existent—and the *Asat*—the unreal, the fleeting, the non-

existent. One's standard of good and evil proceeds from these. Anything that is a combination of matter is *Asat*, that is, fleeting and changeable; when we cling ignorantly to such transitory things to gratify our momentary impulses, we become *Asat*, and it is such unsteady characters which we call bad. As, however, any one who is bad has become so through habit, through holding his mind on the plane of evil, so he can overcome this tendency by learning to hold his mind on the plane of good, by cultivating a good habit of thought. At first it will be difficult for him and he will have to struggle hard; but if he persistently looks only for the good everywhere, then in the end he is sure to conquer and his character will be transformed.)

This is undoubtedly not an easy task for any one, because however we may try, we are bound sometimes to come in con-

tact with evil; especially is this true for those who live in the world and have to associate with all kinds of people. What are we to do then? How are we to overcome this difficulty? Patanjali's advice is helpful: "Friendship, mercy, gladness, indifference, being thought of in regard to subjects, happy, unhappy, good and evil, respectively, pacify the mind." This is the real secret. It is evident that we cannot entirely avoid evil, but we can counteract and remedy it by holding these four sorts of ideas regarding all things that come before us. We must hold the feeling of friendship toward all, and be merciful to those who are in misery. When others are happy we should feel happy too, and to the wicked and evil-minded we must be indifferent. If the subject is good, we must be friendly toward it, because true friendship is only possible and desirable with good and sincere people.

We cannot give a friendly embrace to a tiger or a snake; the wisest thing is to avoid them.

Then if the subject of thought is miserable, we must be merciful toward it. When we see anybody suffer, we must try to remove his misery with a feeling of love and sympathy. This we must do with unselfishness and non-attachment toward the fruits of our actions. Whether the one whom we help is grateful or otherwise matters not. Whenever we have the opportunity of helping any one, we must bear in mind that it is for our good, for our own salvation. (It is a privilege to serve God in the form of the miserable and thus build our characters and manifest Divinity.)

Next is gladness: we must be glad when others are happy. When any one becomes prosperous, victorious and successful, we must be happy to see him

happy. Instead of entertaining the feeling of jealousy or hatred, we must rejoice in the joy of others. There is no peace or happiness in that heart which cannot stand the good fortune of others.

The last and most difficult precept is to be indifferent to evil subjects. This is hard, because it needs immense self-control to balance the mind and discriminate rightly. The feelings of both love and hatred are natural, but indifference is very difficult to practise. We can love good, but we cannot love evil, however we may talk of loving all. There naturally rises the opposite, hatred, in our hearts. For instance, if a man does evil to us, we at once become disturbed and react by wanting to injure him. But thereby we gain nothing; we only lose our strength and energy. Every time we get angry or try to counteract evil by hatred we weaken ourselves and obstruct our spiritual

growth. So one who possesses the power of discrimination and self-control can alone overcome this difficulty by feeling neither friendship nor animosity toward the evil object.)

When we hold our minds on the physical plane, we become weak on the spiritual plane. (To regain our spiritual strength we must withdraw our minds from the plane of matter. A great help to this is the company of the holy. Even a moment's association with great men will help us to cross over the ocean of worldliness. Who are great men? Those who are unselfish, all-loving and who remain unmoved under praise or blame; who live in this world not to gain anything for themselves, but to serve and help mankind for love's sake. When we come in contact with such lofty souls, a deep impression is made on our mind and this gradually changes the whole character. The very

same man who was wicked may now become a saint.

Although the company of holy men may do much to purify us and change our nature, however, character is after all what we form ourselves by our own habits of thought and by our own deeds. We alone are responsible for our characters. If we are now bad, we can change and become good. It all depends upon ourselves. But as long as we remain on the dual plane, on the plane of good and bad, there is danger of falling back. We must, therefore, go beyond both and reach a state where our characters become perfect. Then neither good nor bad can any longer have an effect upon them; they remain untouched by either. This is the only thing that is permanent in this transitory world and until we have reached this state we are not free from danger. Thus a man who lives in solitude and tries to form his

character may appear to be perfect as long as he does not come into evil association, but he cannot be judged until he is seen in the midst of evil. That is the test. (A perfect character is one who can go through good and bad unmoved.) As it has been beautifully expressed by Emerson: “It is easy in the world to live after the world’s opinion ; it is easy in solitude to live after our own ; but the great man is he who, in the midst of the crowd, keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.” This is the exact definition of a perfect man, who is always the same under all circumstances.

We need both good and evil to form the perfect character ; and the hard blows, which we call evil, often help us more than the good. If we look at the lives of great men, they seem to have gained most from blows, from adversity. Good is necessary too, but we must especially try to be

steady when we come in contact with evil. These great men first overcame evil by practising the good, and then they rose still higher, where they could not be touched by either good or evil—where neither moved them.

Such a character was Suka, who was the son of a great sage and born perfect. At an early age his father sent him to the court of King Janaka to learn. In order to test him the king gave certain instructions beforehand to his courtiers, and when the boy arrived at the gate of the palace he was allowed to sit there three days and three nights without being noticed even by the guards of the palace. Then high officials came and received him with royal honor. Still his face did not change; he remained unmoved. When at last he was led before the king, the king gave him a cup of milk, full to the brim, and told him to carry it seven times

around the hall without spilling a drop. In the midst of music and dancing the boy walked seven times round the hall with the same calm face and without spilling one drop of the milk. Then the king said to him: "You have nothing more to learn. You have known the Truth. Go home to your father."

The only true help that you can render to mankind is when by your very character you teach others. Then you do good by your every word, your every movement. When, for instance, you remain steady under all conditions of good and evil, those around you learn the value of steadiness and begin to try to practise it themselves. Thus by the example of your character your whole life becomes a lesson to others. In the Sacred Writings of Vedanta we read of a youthful illumined spiritual teacher and an aged grey-haired disciple seated under a banyan-tree. The

disciple's mind was full of doubts and he questioned, but the teacher kept silent and the disciple's doubts were gradually dispelled. Such is the force of character. It speaks louder than language. Its power is wonderfully effective—more than anything in this universe.

(Purity has been the foundation of all truly great characters.) If you build a house on the sand, it is sure to tumble down; similarly, if we build our characters on anything but purity, they will not stand. Impurity is a mixture; purity is one without a second. Mixed thoughts are seeing many; pure thought is when you see only One. When you think of any one's evil side, you yourself take that evil; just as when you meditate on a saint, you gain saintliness. (What you think you become.) When we realize how much we lose by dwelling on the plane of evil, we grow watchful and hold the mind only on the

plane of good and see in everything the All-pervading God. If we wish to save ourselves, we shall have to struggle hard, we shall have to regain inch by inch what we have lost by dwelling on the evil in the world.

But it may be said, every one has mixed feelings—sometimes good, sometimes bad. How can we get out of this state? By using the power of discrimination, by constantly training the mind to distinguish the right from the wrong and to seek only the good. This is the practical life. Building of character is the only true practice of Yoga, and it is the only way we can really help humanity.) Christ helped the world by His character. It is not that He turned this earth into a heaven. This is not possible. There was just as much evil in the world after He came as before, but by His example He is helping each individual soul to over-

come its limitations and to strive toward perfection.

Neither Christ nor Buddha, nor any other prophet, claimed to be an exception. On the contrary, they preached that all can become like them. We can all attain the same perfection. But only (when we build our characters on the firm foundation of purity, unselfishness and non-attachment, will they remain unshaken in all the varying conditions of life and prove a living benediction to our fellow-beings.)

## IV

### POWER OF CONCENTRATION

**W**ISDOM is the goal of human existence. Even men of the lowest intelligence want to know the secret of things ; because knowledge alone can bring peace and happiness to our souls. Ignorance is the main source of all misery and no one really enjoys being in that state. Why do we find so many ignorant, irresponsible people around us then, if all are eager for wisdom? Because, although the desire for wisdom is the natural instinct in every human heart, few possess the power of acquiring it. A man who is inactive, stupid and full of ignorance has every desire to be all-knowing, only he does not want to work to gain knowledge. There are others who are capable of work and are immensely active, but who do not

know the secret of work and only exhaust their energies in wrong directions. The door of knowledge is ready to open to every one of us if we only know how to knock at it properly.

There is only one way to knowledge and wisdom and that is through the power of concentration. Without this power nobody can accomplish anything in this world. The students who can concentrate their minds fully on their books are the best students. With the least effort they accomplish the most. The scientist in his laboratory concentrates all the energies of his mind in one direction and thus discovers the secrets of Nature. The astronomer fixes his mind, through his telescope, on sun, moon, planets, and they give up their secrets to him. He is a good musician who can concentrate his mind on his music. So also with artists and every one. This is the only road to

knowledge. The more we can concentrate our minds on the subject of our study, the more rapidly the knowledge of that subject is revealed to us. Let us see then how to acquire this power of concentration, since all our wisdom is based on it, especially spiritual wisdom.

Concentration lies at the foundation of the whole system of Yoga practice. Patanjali, in his *Yoga Aphorisms*, defines Yoga as "restraining the mindstuff from taking various forms." This is only possible through the power of concentration. What is the present state of our minds? If we properly analyze, we shall find that they take innumerable forms. Sometimes one's mind is happy, again unhappy; sometimes angry, and again quiet. It is always restless. If we are a little careless and let the mind run, it will perhaps travel thousands of miles away this minute and will begin dreaming of various impres-

sions of the past which will make it accordingly happy or unhappy. This is precisely the condition of our minds.

Among those of you who have read Swami Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga*, some perhaps remember how the mind is compared to a maddened monkey. "There was a monkey, restless by his own nature, as all monkeys are. As if that were not enough, some one made him drink freely of wine, so that he became still more restless. Then a scorpion stung him. When a man is stung by a scorpion he jumps about for a whole day, so the poor monkey found his condition worse than ever. To complete his misery, a demon entered into him. What language can describe the uncontrollable restlessness of that monkey? The human mind is like that monkey, incessantly active by its own nature; then it becomes drunk with the wine of desire, thus increasing its turbu-

lence. After desire takes possession, comes the sting of the scorpion of jealousy of others whose desires meet with fulfillment; and, last of all the demon of pride takes possession of the mind, making it think itself of all importance.” Such is the general condition of the mind. How hard it is to control such a mind! Nobody can do this for us. (We can get many helpful suggestions from our teachers, but we can achieve self-mastery only through our own efforts. It must be our own work.)

Arjuna, the disciple, after listening to the wonderful teaching of the *Gita* from his Master, Krishna, said: “This Yoga of even-mindedness taught by Thee, I see not its steady continuance, because of the restlessness of my mind.” To that the Blessed Lord replied: “Doubtless, O Mighty-Armed, (the mind is restless and hard to restrain, yet by constant practice

and dispassion it is subdued.") There is no other way. We ourselves must accomplish the work of subduing the mind by our perseverance and unfailing practice. Yogis, or spiritual men, through their careful study have found out all the various intricate tendencies of the mind and body, and also how one can subdue them through different practices of concentration and so attain absolute self-mastery.

Our mind manifests itself in various forms: *Kshipta*, *Mudha*, *Vikshipta* and *Ekâgra*. *Kshipta* means scattered. We often find our mind in this stage when our thoughts are various and the mind jumps from one thing to another. This is a state of activity and the mind runs after sense pleasures. But no real peace or happiness can be found while it is in this scattered state. The nature of the second is dullness, inactivity, and one becomes indiscriminative and injures others. Next is

*Vikshipta* or the state in which we struggle to centralize the mind, but often without success. When we do not find satisfaction either in the scattered or dull state of mind, then we begin to struggle for some higher form. If we persevere we reach the state of *Ekâgra*, the concentrated or one-pointed mind. Only when the mind arrives at this state do we attain to superconsciousness and become free forever. The first three states are not fitted to bring spiritual realization. But in the last stage, through the power of concentration, we can collect all our mental and physical energies and direct them toward the highest realization.

When the mind is not concentrated, it is weak and we cannot accomplish anything with it. Our mind in the first three states is like thin fibres which are scattered and separated one from the other; it cannot stand any pressure, but breaks

easily. But when through the power of concentration we are able to wind our scattered thoughts into one cord, then we are able to resist all distractions, even as twisted fibres can resist the strength of an elephant.

The value of concentration is unquestionable. It helps every one in every stage of life. But the greatest man is he who can concentrate his mind on the Supreme Reality, for "we become exactly what we think." Intense thought forms our external and internal nature. This we can often see in the case of a devoted husband and wife; they become like each other in their manners, nay, even in their appearance. This fact is very obviously shown in the life of Saint Francis of Assisi, who by constantly concentrating his mind on Jesus the Christ grew to be like Christ. It is even said his external figure became transformed and showed the

marks of the stigmata. Such is the power of concentration that it can change the whole nature of a man. (By concentrating our minds on a pure, holy being we become holy. Similarly, when we turn our thoughts to material objects, we become materialistic.)

It is comparatively easy to concentrate our minds on external objects, but it is very difficult to turn our thoughts on things within. Very few have the patience or courage to do it. We must take some definite object on which to concentrate, and then go on practising till we have fully subdued all other thoughts but that one. For instance, take the thought of unselfishness or purity. Fill your whole being with that one thought, think of nothing but that, dream of nothing but that, and feel nothing but that, then you will eventually become pure and unselfish. At first many thoughts will rise in opposition.

But every time you attempt to subdue them you will find yourself stronger, and gradually through constant practice you will conquer them fully. Real Yoga practice is when we try to collect our thoughts from all sources, make them one and connect them with our Inner Self. Yoga means this union with the Supreme Self which destroys all ignorance. We cannot feel this union, or have the vision of the Self, until our mind is wholly subdued and quiet, like the calm surface of a lake. As long as there are ripples in the form of innumerable desires, we cannot see the bottom where the *Atman* or True Self dwells. So our duty is to practise with patience and perseverance until we have succeeded in making our mind one-pointed and have subdued all mixed and wandering thoughts.

This is not the work of a day, but may take years, nay, lives. Progress, however,

depends entirely upon our earnestness. There are degrees of earnestness and our success varies accordingly, as is shown by different temperaments. Some are exceedingly slow in their nature and do not have any power of determination or perseverance; while others are wonderfully energetic and ready to sacrifice even their lives in their attempts. Sri Ramakrishna gives a parable to this effect of two peasants who were working in their fields to bring water. The wife of one came and asked her husband to leave his work until the next day. As it was late, the man after a little hesitation gave up and went home. The wife of the other came and urged him and scolded him, but the man was determined to finish his work. At last, after a whole day's toil, he was able to bring the water into his field and could take his rest in peace, knowing his task had been accomplished. So long as we

lack in steadfastness and discrimination and waste our energies by jumping from one thing to another, we cannot succeed in anything. No matter what path we follow, we must learn to be steady and faithful; without this no knowledge is obtainable. "There is no wisdom to the unsteady, and no meditation to the unwise, and to the unmeditative no peace; to the peaceless how can there be happiness?"

( What is meditation? Meditation is a constant remembrance of the object we meditate upon. It is described as like "an unbroken stream of oil poured from one vessel to another." When we attain to this kind of remembrance in relation to the Supreme Being, then all the bonds of the heart break and it becomes illumined by the presence of the Self. Through meditation we feel the nearness of Divinity. There is no other way to

reach Him. No external power can give us the vision of God. Because He is the nearest of all friends, nearest of anything that we can perceive. "He is greater than the greatest, smaller than the smallest, and He dwells in the core of every heart." As long as we try to see Him outside of us, we never find Him, all our struggles are in vain. But when by experience we find it impossible to see Him outside of us, then we turn our thoughts within and become meditative.

In each of us there are two tendencies —the centrifugal and the centripetal. The one drives us toward external objects, the other draws us inward. The one scatters our energies and weakens us, the other helps us to centralize them and makes us strong. When through the power of concentration we are able to subdue all our various disturbing thoughts and desires, then we get the

vision of the Supreme Self seated on the altar of our hearts. Then alone all crookedness will be straightened out and all doubts about the Self will vanish forever. We shall be supremely blissful, knowing that we and the Father are one.

# V

## SELF-REALIZATION

**R**EALIZATION is the watchword of all religions. If there is a God, we must see Him; if there is a Supreme Self, we must realize It. Otherwise these theories about the existence of God and the Soul have very little value. If we cannot put them on a practical basis and realize the truth of them, they remain for us but mere words. This realization is the only thing that can bring satisfaction to us. No amount of theory can ever satisfy our minds. Unless we can see the reality of things for ourselves, we can never find satisfaction. The various methods of joining words, the various methods of speaking in beautiful language, the various methods of expound-

ing the Scriptures cleverly are only for the enjoyment of the learned, but they never lead to spiritual realization, nor can they ever bring freedom. What use is there in studying the Scriptures if we thereby gain no spiritual wisdom? Studying means to get the directions which lead to the ultimate goal; and when we forget that, we do not gain any profit whatsoever, though we may spend our whole life in reading all the Scriptures of the world. There is a saying in India that "As a donkey carries loads of sandal-wood on his back, only feeling the weight of the burden without getting the benefit of the sweet perfume, so it is with those who study innumerable Scriptures without knowing the essence—the truth—of them."

There is a great deal of difference between a philosopher or a man of book-learning, and a Seer-of-Truth or a man

of realization. The philosopher may have studied all the Vedas and other Scriptures and may be able to quote long passages from them, but the Seer-of-Truth knows because he has seen. The first merely repeats what he has learned; the second says, “Yes, I *know!*” Thus his words are bold. Experience is the real and only way of acquiring strength. Real strength comes through realization; when a man has seen God he can declare with conviction that there is a God. When we have seen a thing, no matter how much people may deny the existence of that thing, we can still stand up boldly and declare, “I know it exists.”

We hear and read about the immortal nature of our Soul, yet we are all the time afraid of dying. Why is that? Because we have no conception of our true nature; we have no realization of the Self, the real man. In fact we

have no idea what Soul means. Our knowledge is limited to this material body; and if we try to form any idea of ourselves, we only do it through this limited body which is subject to constant changes. So, however we may study and however we may talk about the immortal nature of our Self; nay, however we may repeat *Sohum* (I am He) and other sacred words; it all carries very little weight without the realization of the ultimate meaning of these things. In India parrots are trained to repeat holy names and as long as they are unmolested they will repeat them; but no sooner does a cat come after them than they give their natural cry, forgetting all about the names they have been taught. Similarly, people repeat the words of the Scriptures without comprehending their meaning; and that is why when trouble comes, they are so miser-

able, so weak, so much in fear of death. But when we realize the Self, when we perceive It as we perceive the existence of those around us, we can no longer doubt. Then fear of death or of disease will cease to exist.

Nature has no influence on the Supreme Self of man, which is in reality one and the same with God; so Self-realization and God-vision are not two different things. Man is the expression of God and God is the reality of man. Real man and God are inseparable. There is only one reality in this universe, whom the devotee worships as a Personal God, and a *Jnani* or wise man as his own Self. The difference is only in names and methods of reaching the goal; but when the goal is reached, both come to the same understanding—that there is but One by Whom everything is pervaded. “This *Atman* is not to be real-

ized by the intellect, nor by words, nor by hearing from many sources; but by him by whom this *Atman* is beloved, by him alone is the *Atman* realized." The thing necessary for us is to feel intense love in our hearts for this Supreme Self or God; otherwise He is not attainable. There is no other way that man can reach unto God, except through love—love always unites. This love for God comes unto those blessed beings who are pure in heart, from whom all attachment for unreal things, all selfish desires have vanished. This purity of heart and love for God are the sum and substance of all religious teachings.)

We may spend the whole of our lives searching earnestly for Truth in temples, in churches and in books; but without understanding the significance of these fundamental teachings all these efforts will be in vain. Religion is practical and

those who observe the practical side of it realize the Truth. You may not know how to read a single book, but if you have known the Truth which is behind them, you are much better off than the so-called philosopher who may speak in beautiful language but who has no realization whatsoever. It is a dangerous thing to hear the Truth from one who has not realized, for he will only bring confusion in the mind; but one who has realized will teach with very few words. Swami Vivekananda says in one of his lectures that he who has something to give, gives it in most simple language; but one who has nothing to give, he sometimes writes two volumes to expound one word. So we see that we can gain nothing when we come in contact with such people; they only confuse our brain.

( He who has attained illumination does

not need to use many words. His life itself is an answer to all questions, for the sun of wisdom always shines in his heart. This makes one bold; before this strength all other strength is insignificant. When Alexander the Great was in India, he met a sage with whose wisdom he was so deeply impressed that he wished to carry him back to Greece, but the sage refused to go. The king offered him wealth and honor; still he refused. Then at last growing angry, the king said: "If you do not come, I will kill you!" At this the sage smiled and replied: "King, you never said anything more foolish. You cannot kill me—me whom sword cannot pierce, whom fire cannot burn, whom water cannot melt, and air cannot dry. I am an eternal, indestructible Soul!" Such strength comes when we attain to Self-realization; then we never depend on anything or

anybody and we become absolutely fearless.

But it is very difficult for those who identify themselves with the body and have strong attachment for sense-pleasures to realize the Self which is beyond all limitation. You remember the story of the two seekers after Truth who went to a saint to learn about the Self. The saint gave the same teaching to both: "*Tat twam asi* [Thou are That]—the Lord does not exist apart from you; find Him out yourself within yourself." The one, owing to his density and fondness for the body, understood the saying of the saint to mean that his material body was the Self; but the other was finer in nature, and through his earnestness and sincere inquiry came to realize the Self, which is beyond body, mind, senses and all human limitations. Too much fondness for the body creates bondage and

obstructs our spiritual growth. At the same time, those who neglect to take proper care of their bodies retard their spiritual growth and may even make it impossible, as is seen in some individual cases where the body is broken down by practising too much asceticism. This body should be regarded as an instrument through the help of which we are to work out our salvation. For that reason we must take all necessary care to keep it well and strong, but without thinking it all in all. The human body is compared to a *Vina* (string instrument) which produces beautiful music when properly tuned. In order to tune properly we need to use moderation; if we put too much pressure on the strings, they give way; and if we put no pressure at all, no music is produced. In the same way, if we use discrimination, we can save ourselves from being radical mate-

rialists or extreme ascetics. Our aim and object are neither the body nor bodily enjoyment, but to gain that knowledge of the Self which will bring us absolute freedom.)

We try to get happiness in this world, but nothing can give it unless we have found it within ourselves. That which is consciousness in the world is the Self and in That alone we find all our true happiness and bliss. Who cares for the material body? We all love the Self, no matter whether we know it or not. We all love that consciousness which is the Self of man. (As long as that consciousness dwells in the body, we care for the body; but the moment the spirit leaves, we no longer care for the empty shell. We may not recognize this fact because of our weakness born of living on the material plane. We follow the regular process of physical life and we train our

children to do the same. The young are taught to study a little, later to earn money, then to marry and seek pleasure and material prosperity. This is the regular routine of life and those who do not wish to follow it are looked upon as eccentric. But are people helped by this method of education? No! It makes them weak and dependent, because it binds them to the material plane. True moral strength will come only when we depend on our true Self. You wish to make your children moral; but to do this you must hold up before them the right ideal, which alone will give them real strength. Do not give them the weakening thought that they must depend on material things for their happiness; but tell them from their childhood that they are Spirit and not the physical body; that they are the Immortal Self, which is above all external conditions. Only thus

will you make them strong. No weak person can realize the Supreme) Self. At present we think ourselves weak and we have become so, but let us cease to think it and all weakness will drop off. Do not remind any one of his weakness. Make even a criminal feel the best that is in him. If you wish to help any one, do not regard his weak side, but call out all that he has of good; only so will you help him to realize his better nature. However hard it may be, we must all seek realization, for in that alone shall we find real peace.

There are different paths which we may take to attain this end, but all lead to the same goal, Supreme Realization. One who merely works for the Lord gets this realization; another does it by faith in the same Lord; while the *Jnani* who travels by the path of “*neti, neti*” (not this, not this) also reaches Him. As

when you enter a dark room to get some article, you pass from one object to another, saying "Not this," until you find the thing you want, then you cease your search; so also *the Jnani* puts aside one worldly object after another until he finds that for which he was searching, and so attains the goal. Thus *the first class*—the workers—by entire unselfishness, by giving all their labor freely without thought of personal gain, making every deed an act of worship, are purified in heart and attain realization. The *second class*—the *Bhaktas* or devotees—by worshipping the Lord with intense single-hearted devotion reach union with the Divine Object of their worship and attain realization. The *third class*—the *Jnanis*—take the hardest way to reach the goal. Rigid self-control and constant self-denial alone can carry them on the way. Only the strong, mentally and physi-

cally, can travel by this road; but he who is determined and perseveres to the end arrives at realization of the Self. He sees It dwelling in every living thing, and thus seeing the Self everywhere and knowing his oneness with It, he cannot hate or injure any being.

This realization is the goal of all mankind. We are all struggling to reach it, though we may not know it. Some have already learned how transitory are the things of the world and are searching for something more permanent, more real; others still cling to the objects of the senses; but sooner or later all must come to this one goal. "Because this perception of the Self alone cuts all the knots of our hearts, destroys all doubts, and removes all the binding effect of *karma*."

(Having once enjoyed the vision of the Supreme, we become really blessed; we

no longer depend on the outside world, but we dwell within ourselves and become Self-satisfied. The one object of all the religious teachings of the world is to bring unto us this realization.) Though the path may be hard and difficult to tread, yet let us march on with real faith and perseverance, and never give up through fear or discouragement. (Let us never forget the call of the awakened souls who have found out the way of Immortal Bliss, but let us “Arise! awake, and stop not till the goal is reached!”

VI

SELECTIONS  
FROM UPANISHADS AND  
OTHER SCRIPTURES



## DISCRIMINATION

“THE good is one thing, the pleasant another; these two, having different objects, chain a man. It is well with him who clings to the good; he who chooses the pleasant, misses his end.”

“The good and the pleasant approach man: the wise goes round about them and distinguishes them. Yea, the wise prefers the good to the pleasant, but the fool chooses the pleasant through greed and avarice.”

“Thou, O Nachiketas, after pondering all pleasures that are or seem delightful, hast dismissed them all. Thou

hast not gone into the road that leadeth to wealth, in which many men sink."

"Wide apart and leading to different points are these two—ignorance, and what is known as wisdom. ~~I~~ believe Nachiketas to be one who desires knowledge, for even many pleasures did not tear thee away."

"He [the Self] of whom many are not even able to hear, whom many even when they hear of Him do not comprehend; wonderful is a man, when found, who is able to teach Him [the Self]; wonderful is he who comprehends Him, when taught by an able teacher [man of realization]."

—*Katha Upanishad.*

## GOD AND MAN

“TWO birds, inseparable friends, cling to the same tree. One of them eats the sweet fruit, the other looks on without eating.

“On the same tree man sits grieving, immersed, bewildered by his own impotence. But when he sees the other Lord [Isa] contented, and knows his glory, then his grief passes away.”

“When the Seer sees the brilliant Maker and Lord [of the world] as the Person who has His source in Brahman, then he is wise, and, shaking off good and evil, he reaches the highest oneness, free from passions.”

“For He is the Breath shining forth in all beings, and he who understands this becomes truly wise, not a talker only. He revels in the Self, he delights in the Self, and, having performed his works [truthfulness, penance, meditation, etc.], he rests firmly established in Brahman, the best of those who know the Truth.”

—*Mundaka-Upanishad.*

## REALIZATION

“**N**OR is that Self to be gained by one who is destitute of strength, or without earnestness, or without right meditation. But if a wise man strives after it by those means [by strength, earnestness, and right meditation], then his Self enters the home of Brahman.”

“When they have reached Him [the Self], the sages become satisfied through knowledge; they are conscious of their Self, their passions have passed away, and they are tranquil. The wise, having reached Him, who is omnipresent everywhere, devoted to the Self, enter into Him wholly.”

“Having well ascertained the object of the knowledge of the Vedanta, having purified their nature by the Yoga of renunciation, all anchorites, enjoying the highest immortality, become free at the time of the great end [death] in the worlds of Brahma.”

—*Mundaka-Upanishad.*

“The first results of Yoga they call lightness, healthiness, steadiness, a good complexion, an easy pronunciation, a sweet odor, and slight excretions.”

“As a metal disk [mirror] tarnished by dust shines bright again after it has been cleaned, so is the one incarnate person satisfied and free from grief after he has seen the real nature of the Self.”

“And when, by means of the real nature of his Self, he sees, as by a lamp,

the real nature of Brahman, then, having known the Unborn, Eternal God, who is beyond all natures, he is freed from all fetters.”

“Let us know that highest great Lord of lords, the highest Deity of deities, the Master of masters, the highest above as God, the Lord of the World, the Adorable.”

—*Svetasvatara-Upanishad.*

## THE “DHAMMAPADA”; OR PATH TO VIRTUE

**A**LL that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage.

All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him like a shadow that never leaves him.

The virtuous delights in this world, and he delights in the next; he delights in both. He delights and rejoices when he sees the purity of his own work.

Earnestness is the path of immortal-

ity, thoughtlessness the path of death. Those who are in earnest do not die; those who are thoughtless are as if dead already.

Having understood this clearly, those who are advanced in earnestness, delight in earnestness and rejoice in knowledge of the elect.

If an earnest person has roused himself, if he is not forgetful, if his deeds are pure, if he acts with consideration, if he restrains himself, and lives according to law—then his glory will increase.

By rousing himself, by earnestness, by restraint and control, the wise man may make for himself an island which no flood can overwhelm.

These wise people, meditative, steady, always possessed of strong powers, attain to Nirvana, the highest happiness.

If you see a man who shows you what is to be avoided, who administers re-

proofs, and is intelligent, follow that wise man as you would one who tells of hidden treasures; it will be better, not worse, for him who follows him.

Do not have evil-doers for friends, do not have low people for friends: have virtuous people for friends, have for friends the best of men.

Few are there among men who arrive at the other shore; the other people here run up and down the shore. But those who, when the law has been well preached to them, follow the law, will pass over the dominion of death, however difficult to cross.

There is no suffering for him who has finished his journey, and abandoned grief, who has freed himself on all sides, and thrown off all fetters.

The gods even envy him whose senses, like horses well broken in by the driver, have been subdued, who is free from

pride, and free from appetites; his thought is quiet; quiet are his word and deed, when he has obtained freedom by true knowledge, when he has thus become a quiet man.

If a man holds himself dear, let him watch himself carefully; during one at least out of the three watches a wise man should be watchful.

Let each man direct himself first to what is proper, then let him teach others; thus a wise man will not suffer. If a man makes himself as he teaches others to be, then, being himself well subdued, he may subdue others; for one's own self is difficult to subdue.

He who gives himself to vanity, and does not give himself to meditation, forgetting the real aim of life and grasping at pleasure, will in time envy him who has exerted himself in meditation.

Let a man leave anger, let him for-

sake pride, let him overcome all bondage! No sufferings befall the man who is not attached to name and form, and who calls nothing his own.

He who holds back rising anger like a rolling chariot, him I call a real driver; other people are but holding the reins.

A man is not learned because he talks much; he who is patient, free from hatred and fear, he is called learned.

A man is not a supporter of the law because he talks much; even if a man has learnt little, but sees the law bodily, he is a supporter of the law, a man who never neglects the law.

A man is not an elder because his head is grey; his age may be ripe, but he is called "Old-in-vain."

He in whom there is truth, virtue, pity, restraint, moderation, he who is free from impurity and is wise, he is called an elder.

“These sons belong to me, and this wealth belongs to me,” with such thoughts a fool is tormented. He himself does not belong to himself; how much less sons and wealth?

The fool who knows his foolishness is wise at least so far; but a fool who thinks himself wise, he is called a fool indeed.

SHIVO HUM  
TRANSLATION FROM THE  
SANSKRIT

BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

I AM neither body nor changes of the body;  
Nor am I senses or object of the senses.  
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge  
Absolute, Bliss Absolute;  
I am He, I am He.  
(Shivo Hum, Shivo Hum.)

I am neither sin nor virtue; nor temple,  
nor worship;  
Nor pilgrimage, nor books.  
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge  
Absolute, Bliss Absolute;  
I am He, I am He.  
(Shivo Hum, Shivo Hum.)

I have neither death, nor fear of death;  
Nor was I ever born, nor had I parents.  
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge  
Absolute, Bliss Absolute;  
I am He, I am He.  
(*Shivo Hum, Shivo Hum.*)

I am not misery, nor ever had I misery;  
I am not enemy, nor had I enemies.  
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge  
Absolute, Bliss Absolute;  
I am He, I am He.  
(*Shivo Hum, Shivo Hum.*)

I am without form, without limit, be-  
yond space, beyond time;  
I am in everything; I am the basis of the  
universe; everywhere am I.  
I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge  
Absolute, Bliss Absolute;  
I am He, I am He.  
(*Shivo Hum, Shivo Hum.*)

MOHA-MUDGARA  
OR  
HAMMER TO DELUSION

WHO is thy wife? Who is thy son?  
How curious is this world!  
Who art thou thyself—and whence  
comest thou?  
Think on the truth of these things, O  
Brother.

Worship the Lord. Worship the Lord.  
Worship the Lord, fool that thou art!

Even from a son comes dread to the rich,  
is a common proverb.  
Take no pride in having riches, or youth,  
or family-retainers.

Time steals them all away in a moment;  
full of illusion is all this—  
Giving up these enter into the path of  
Brahman, and enter into it quickly.  
Worship the Lord. Worship the Lord.  
Worship the Lord, fool that thou art!

Giving up lust, anger, greed and all  
attachment,  
Think, Brother, who art thou thyself in  
reality;  
One who is devoid of self-knowledge,  
He suffers agony in the lightless cell.  
Worship the Lord. Worship the Lord.  
Worship the Lord, fool that thou art!

In enemy and friend, in son, in relations,  
Strive not to make either strife or peace.  
But keep an even heart toward all  
If thou desirest to attain the stage of  
omnipresence in a moment.

Worship the Lord. Worship the Lord.  
Worship the Lord, fool that thou art!

Unstable as the drop of water on the  
lotus-leaf,  
So is this life extremely impermanent.  
The company of sages—even for a mo-  
ment—in this world  
Proves a boat in crossing the sea of this  
*Samsara*.

Worship the Lord. Worship the Lord.  
Worship the Lord, fool that thou art!

Day and night, evening and morning,  
Autumn and spring coming again and  
again,  
Time playing—life going,  
Even then not quenched the hope of the  
life-breath.

Worship the Lord. Worship the Lord.  
Worship the Lord, fool that thou art!

The body becomes wrinkled, the head becomes grey,  
The mouth becomes toothless, the staff trembles in hand;  
Even then the jar of hope remains unbroken.

Worship the Lord. Worship the Lord.  
Worship the Lord, fool that thou art!

A child engaged in play,  
When youth engaged in making love,  
In old age merged in anxiety—  
Not one is engaged in contemplation of the Supreme Brahman.

Worship the Lord. Worship the Lord.  
Worship the Lord, fool that thou art!

As long as there is birth, there is death—  
So long is Mother's womb lying (rebirth).  
This is the obvious object of this world.  
How in this world, O man, can be your happiness?

Worship the Lord. Worship the Lord.  
Worship the Lord, fool that thou art!

On! on! and waver not until the Ideal is realized. No rest, friend, till that *abode of peace* is found. The heart may sink with despair when even the hardest struggle brings no good result. Yet that is the point where we most need to show our strength, because that is the test of life. From surface to bottom religious truths teach but one thing, and that is strength, self-reliance. Let us all pray to the Supreme sincerely and earnestly to open unto us the gate of light, strength and wisdom. May He grant unto the followers of all religions, nay, to all living beings, His peace and bliss. Peace! Peace! Peace!







